

the Guises, Duke Francis and his brother, the Cardinal of Lorraine, the uncles of Francis' young queen, Mary of Scots, who were now supreme. The opposition, on personal grounds, of a large number of influential malcontents to the *regime* of the Guises, notably of the Prince of Condé, whom they slighted, encouraged the men of action in their determination to retaliate. The hesitation of others was dispelled by the opinion of the theologians and jurists, whom they consulted, that they were entitled, under the leadership of a prince of the blood, to resort to force in order to vindicate the royal authority from the Guise tyranny. Hence the conspiracy of Amboise, in which political and religious motives combined to precipitate the forward party under Condé and La Renaudie on the path of active resistance. The conspirators should seize the castle of Blois and compel Francis to summon the States-General and substitute the Bourbons for the Guises as his ministers, on penalty of deposition for refusal. Coligny was not yet prepared to go the length of conspiracy and revolt, and counselled negotiation. His wisdom was proved by the event. The plot was discovered ; the Guises took measures betimes to frustrate it, and when the conspirators appeared before the castle of Amboise, whither the court had removed, they were surprised and butchered, captured and hanged, decapitated, drowned in the Loire, dragged at horses' tails without mercy. The ascendancy of the duke and the cardinal seemed assured; the policy of coercion, which the scare of conspiracy had temporarily checked, was renewed, though somewhat less virulently (Edict of Romorantin, May 1560); the King of Navarre submitted, and Condé was arrested and condemned at Orleans. The rebellious spirit, nevertheless, continued active, and forced the Guises to summon the States-General to Orleans to consider the reform of the kingdom.

The States-General met on the 13th December 1560. A week earlier the sickly young monarch died, and power slipped from the hands of the duke and the cardinal into those of his mother, Catherine de Medici, virtual, if not titular, regent for her second son, Charles IX. Had Francis lived a week longer, the head of Condé, whose execution was fixed for the 10th December, would have rolled on the block.

Catherine was more a politician than a bigot, and adopted